



# DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Mittelstadt Chief Deputy

## March Sheriff's Column – Dodge County Sheriff Cadets

In 2008, I was fortunate enough to be able to develop a youth engagement program called the Dodge County Law Enforcement Explorer Post. We have since rebranded the organization and it is now called the Dodge County Sheriff Cadets. The purpose of this program has always been to engage with our youth to educate them on a career in the law enforcement field. It has grown into so much more and as we are starting our 15<sup>th</sup> year I look back at our work and see so many very neat success stories.

Before I get to those successes, I should tell you a bit about the program. The cadet program is a volunteer program for youth and young adults age 14 through 21. The program is aimed at young men and women who have thoughts of working in the law enforcement field. They meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of every month and they train on various law enforcement topics. Some of those topics include basic investigative techniques such as interview and interrogation, how to conduct a proper traffic stop, investigating a domestic disturbance, response to burglaries and robberies and so much more. They have an opportunity to attend regional, state and national conferences to show off the education they have received and they have a very sizeable trophy case in the lobby of the sheriff's office. Once our cadets turn 18 they are encouraged to ride along with sheriff deputies on patrol, sit in dispatch to observe 911 calls and the many other tasks our dispatchers do, or spend time in the jail to learn the role of a correctional officer. Finally, our Cadets are very much involved in the community taking on a variety of community service projects.

While all of this is a great deal of fun for the cadets, there is so much more to the program which benefits our youth. Our program is designed to instill in its members leadership skills and responsibility. It is a program that truly grows future leaders. We hold our cadets to a high standard including being successful with their school work and being successful with everyday decisions. They are shown how decisions they make early in life can impact their long-term success in their personal and professional lives. While from time to time they make decisions that are not always in their best interest, we use those moments to mentor them to make better decisions in the future.

Our selection process for the sheriff cadets is very similar to that of the hiring process for a deputy sheriff. They must apply online at [www.dodgecountysheriff.com](http://www.dodgecountysheriff.com) under the

Cadet Community Program page. They are then contacted for an interview conducted by the command staff of the sheriff cadets and a cadet advisor (deputy sheriff). If the interview goes well, we conduct a background investigation and if they pass they are brought on to start their training and enjoy the experience.

In 14 years, our program has developed many young men and women into eventual employees of the sheriff's office and other law enforcement agencies. Currently, our agency employs former explorers/cadets who fill the roles of Patrol Sergeant, Deputy Sheriff, Field Training Officer, Communications Officer, and Community Service Officer. One cadet is scheduled to become a Correctional Officer in June. Some of our deputies have also rejoined the cadet program as advisors working to develop the next group of young leaders.

I am extremely proud of our sheriff cadet program and its success and look forward to many more years of watching our youth grow. It is just one more way that we at the sheriff's office work to make Dodge County a great place to live, work and visit.

Sheriff Dale Schmidt